

# Best Practices for Facilitating Q&A Sessions

## Step 1: What is a Q&A and why is it important?

1. A Q&A follows the formal presentation and is *as important* as the presentation itself.
2. Many perceptions are formed and decisions made during the Q&A.
3. It is the last thing the audience hears so it leaves a strong impression.

## Step 2: Q&A preparation

1. **Anticipate questions** – Try to determine what information you left out of your presentation due to time constraints. Audience members may want to ask follow-up questions requesting more detail. Analyze your audience in terms of their beliefs, attitudes and behaviors in order to better predict objections to your message.
2. **Practice** – A trial run-through of your Q&A will make you more comfortable answering questions and it will give you insight as to what questions may be asked.
3. **Make a logistics plan** – In group presentations, will one person take all the questions and divert them to the appropriate member of the team or will all the questions be answered by the team leader?

## Step 3: Keeping the Q&A productive

1. **Encourage questions**
  - a. Instead of asking “Are there any questions?” start with “Who has the first question?”
  - b. What if no one asks a question? Prime the pump by saying: “A question I’m often asked is....” and then answer your question.
  - c. With whom should you make eye contact? With the individual during the time that they ask the question, but speak to the entire audience when giving the reply.
2. **Maintain credibility**
  - a. Keep answers concise and direct. Stay on message.
  - b. Listen to the *entire* question.
  - c. Repeat each question for the benefit of the audience.
  - d. Use bridges, if necessary, to give you time to consider a response.
  - e. Be honest if you don’t know the answer. Let the questioner know you will try to locate that information and get back with them.
3. **Maintain control**
  - a. Dealing with a difficult audience member.
    - i. Defuse loaded questions by stripping away the emotional words to find a question you can answer.
    - ii. Do not engage in a one-on-one dialogue. Instead, offer to speak with the questioner after the presentation.
  - b. Be sensitive to time constraints. If you run out of time, tell the audience that you are out of time and close the session.
  - c. Provide closure. Have the final word.

## References:

Boyd, S., and Boyd, J. *From Dull to Dynamic: Transforming Your Presentations*. Chapel Hill, N.C.: Professional Press, 1998.  
Morgan, Melanie. *Presentational Speaking Theory and Practice*. 7<sup>th</sup> ed. New York: McGraw-Hill Pub. Co. Inc., 2009.